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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for selected countries and regions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which is submitted in compliance with the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 60/216, provides a status report and an analysis of international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/216. It provides a status report and an analysis of the international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan.

2. The General Assembly adopted five resolutions between 1997 and 2005 calling on the international community to assist the Government of Kazakhstan in its efforts to overcome problems related to the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site,[1] also referred to as the Semipalatinsk Polygon. After the international conference on the problems of the Semipalatinsk region, held in Tokyo in 1999, 38 projects in the areas of health, environment and ecology, economic recovery, humanitarian support and information and advocacy were prioritized by international and Kazakh experts. The international donor community pledged more than $20 million in assistance. Since that time, only 5 of those 38 projects have been realized, at a cost of approximately $7.5 million. The international donor community has implemented numerous other projects on a bilateral basis in the socio-economic, environmental, health and education sectors.

3. By its resolution 60/216 on international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan, the General Assembly took note of and recognized the contributions provided by the organizations of the United Nations system, donor States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to humanitarian assistance and to the implementation of projects aimed at the rehabilitation of the region and the role of the Government in this regard. In the same resolution, the Assembly called upon the international community to continue to support Kazakhstan in addressing the challenges of the rehabilitation of the region and its population, taking additional action, including by facilitating the implementation of the Kazakhstan national programme on addressing the problems of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground in a comprehensive manner, and stressed the importance of regional cooperation in this regard. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report at its sixty-third session on progress made in this regard.

4. This report summarizes actions undertaken in the past three years by the Government of Kazakhstan, the United Nations system and the international community in the Semipalatinsk region, and concludes that the efforts have not been sufficient to mitigate the suffering caused by years of nuclear testing.

II. Economic and social conditions

5. Kazakhstan is a middle income country with a dynamic economy. It enjoys macroeconomic stability achieved through reforms in social, monetary and credit policy, land relations and private sector development. By 2004 Kazakhstan had achieved the first three Millennium Development Goals in their original formulation. The country has now set a "Millennium Development Goal plus"

[1] General Assembly resolutions 52/169 M, 53/1 H, 55/44, 57/101 and 60/216.

agenda for these three goals, aiming to halve rural poverty, achieve universal education at the secondary level and strengthen gender equality through politically empowering women by 2015.

6. Nevertheless, the 2007 national report on the Millennium Development Goals shows that, according to data from 2006, 18.2 per cent of the population still lives below, and nearly 40 per cent of the population lives close to, the poverty line.[2] Low and unstable incomes of this group are exacerbated by insecurity of employment, vulnerability and risks in terms of reasonable income-earning opportunities and disadvantages in terms of access to housing, safe water, sanitation and social services. Such poverty and vulnerability are especially marked among the self-employed in the informal sector, most of whom are women. The 2007 report also shows that poverty in Kazakhstan has a rural face and that significant disparities exist among provinces.

7. At the same time, Kazakhstan is facing serious challenges in social sectors, with indicators for Millennium Development Goals 4, 5, 6 and 7 not commensurate with the level of the country's economic development and the prospect that the Goals may not be achieved by 2015.

8. As shown in the previous report to the General Assembly in 2005 (A/60/302, sect. C), the territories of the former Semipalatinsk test site belong to three *oblasts* (provinces) — East Kazakhstan, Pavlodar and Karaganda. The 2007 report shows that the share of population with income below the minimum subsistence level was 12.5 per cent in East Kazakhstan, 12 per cent in Pavlodar and 20.2 per cent in Karaganda, as compared to the national average of 18.2 per cent. In 2006, the portion of the population in Kazakhstan with income below the level of the consumer basket was 2.7 per cent, whereas in East Kazakhstan it was 1.6 per cent, in Pavlodar 0.6 per cent and in Karaganda 4.0 per cent.

9. Child and maternal mortality rates in these *oblasts* remain high. In 2006, the average national child mortality per 1,000 live births was 13.9. In East Kazakhstan this rate was 16.0, in Pavlodar 14.5 and in Karaganda 11.0. In 2006, the maternal mortality rate per 1,000 live births in Kazakhstan was 45.6 whereas in East Kazakhstan it was 59.7, in Pavlodar 18.2 and in Karaganda 25.9.

10. While data is not desegregated to the regional level, and it is not always evident from the *oblast* data that the situation in the former test area is worse than the national average, it is clear that the former test area is still confronted with significant challenges in its social, economic and environmental conditions. Within the ongoing United Nations joint programme "Enhancing human security in the former nuclear test site of Semipalatinsk", the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted analytical research to study markets and growth opportunities for rural small and medium-size entrepreneurs in the former test area. The analysis of the general economic situation and of the business climate for small and medium-sized businesses in the three *oblasts* clearly shows that the local population has less money to spend on goods, market relations are underdeveloped, the infrastructure is poor, access to financial resources is limited and there is a scarcity of business advisory services and technological training for rural entrepreneurs.

[2] The minimum subsistence level income in June 2008 was 12,874 tenge per month ($107, at an approximate exchange rate of 120 tenge = $1).

III. Institutional framework for assistance to the Semipalatinsk region

11. Since the last report to the General Assembly (A/60/302, sect. C), the Government of Kazakhstan has taken the lead in setting the priority areas for the Semipalatinsk region and supporting the rehabilitation of the region through the Government programme for 2005-2007.

12. From 2002 to 2005, UNDP implemented a programme with three subprojects: (a) small grants for non-governmental and community-based organizations; (b) microcredit for women entrepreneurs; and (c) business advisory services. As a second phase of this programme, in 2008 UNDP, the United Nations Volunteers, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) started a three-year joint project entitled "Enhancing human security in the former nuclear test site of Semipalatinsk".[3]

IV. Government programme for the Semipalatinsk region: 2005-2007

13. The Government of Kazakhstan launched a programme for 2005-2007 to address the problems of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, the main goal of which was to improve the ecological, economic, medical and social factors affecting the living standards of the population in the region.

14. In terms of medical rehabilitation of the population, the Ministry of Health reports that it carried out a complex health survey of the local population. A blood bank was established and approximately 14,000 people received hospital, sanatorium-rest and dental treatments.

15. On ecological issues, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources reports that several projects on nuclear safety were implemented. Complex surveys of ground, atmospheric and underwater pollution were conducted. Maps showing the location of radionuclides were developed. The borders of the nuclear testing area (polygon) were determined, special warning signs were restored and safe road routes were specified. Water supplies for 66,300 people were improved.

16. In terms of social security, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection reports that by January 2008 about 279,900 individuals from the affected population had been paid a one-time monetary compensation for the total amount of about $37.3 million. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources reports that in 2005 and 2006, 45,000 new jobs were created, 88.1 per cent of which are permanent. The new jobs were mostly created in the trade, agriculture, construction and production sectors.

[3] The project strives to improve health and promote universal access to basic services; enhance entrepreneurship; create jobs, providing microcredit, leasing and training; and support partnerships with non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations.

V. Donor assistance to the Semipalatinsk region

17. **Social and economic**: from 2005 to 2006, the Embassy of Japan in the Republic of Kazakhstan financed two projects, with a total budget of $120,358, which helped purchase nursing equipment for a kindergarten and repair the heating system of a home for old and disabled people in the Semipalatinsk region.

18. The UNDP Semipalatinsk programme, funded by the Government of Japan with $1.1 million through the Trust Fund for the Semipalatinsk Relief and Rehabilitation Programme, was implemented from 2002 to 2005 (see para. 12 above). The national partner was the administration of Semey city. The main objectives of the programme were to alleviate poverty and raise living standards through income generation, job creation and empowerment. Key programme results included:

(a) The disbursement of microcredits to approximately 400 small entrepreneurs;

(b) The establishment of the Bereke Microcredit Organization;

(c) The implementation of 103 small grants projects in 50 villages;

(d) Support to over 3,000 entrepreneurs, including training and advice from the business advisory centre.

19. The success of the Semipalatinsk programme is now being promoted by UNDP, the United Nations Volunteers, UNICEF and UNFPA through a joint project (see para. 12, above). The main donor is the Japanese Government, which has contributed $1,978,698 through the United Nations Human Security Trust Fund. The project works in several key areas, aiming to:

(a) Ensure access to quality basic health and social services for vulnerable groups;

(b) Build capacities for entrepreneurship and business skills and provide modalities for generating economic and employment opportunities;

(c) Mobilize communities and support non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in providing community services and in acting as agents of change within society.

20. United Nations agencies work with the administration of Semey city and the East Kazakhstan *oblast* as main national partners. In 2008, activities have started at a sustained pace in all areas: United Nations agencies conducted 15 seminars on various medical, economic and social topics for all 345 beneficiaries of the project; UNDP has signed a grant agreement for $200,000 for microcredit and microleasing programmes; UNICEF has established a family-support centre where vulnerable families are able to benefit from social counselling and family support services; and UNFPA has established an evidence-based medical resource centre.

21. From 2005 to 2008, within the framework of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) project "Osthilfe", the Swiss Embassy in Kazakhstan and SDC implemented 17 small projects (with a total budget of 163,060 Swiss francs) that supported the purchase and replacement of various items of medical/dental/laundry/kitchen/sports equipment and furniture in different social institutions of the region. All the projects were successfully completed.

22. Through its Social Development Civil Society Fund, the World Bank is funding a project of the public foundation, "DOM", with the total budget of $5,810 (duration: 2008-2009), in order to establish parent-teacher committees in local schools. The project aims to raise awareness among parents, schoolchildren and teachers on issues related to local budget allocations and the civil rights of parents.

23. From 2002 to 2008, USAID implemented seven projects with a total budget of $60,421, working with local non-governmental organizations and the media. The projects were aimed at building the capacity of non-governmental organizations; helping handicapped children and their parents integrate into society; improve coverage of social, political and economic topics by the media; and foster sustainable growth of small business via loans. The project activities included: training for non-governmental organizations; social and psychological support for handicapped children and their families; and the provision of broadcasting equipment to television stations.

24. From 2002 to 2005, the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom Government, working with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Kazakhstan, implemented a project with a total budget of £716,961 pounds sterling. The project focused on land use planning in the Semipalatinsk polygon and its surroundings, including the development of new tools and participatory processes and the provision of accurate and accessible information. The project helped the National Nuclear Centre to significantly change its practices, including sharing information with the population and taking into account social aspects.

25. **Environment**: from 2005 to 2007 the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) implemented five projects, with a total budget of 126,700 euros, to provide information and materials on radiation safety and ecological issues. The main partners were the National Forum and Centre for Radiation Protection and Ecology. Results included: a radiological map of the Semipalatinsk region, which was distributed to local authorities and non-governmental organizations; local population and authorities were informed about the radiation situation in the region; and summer camps for youth were organized.

26. In 2007 and 2008, the World Bank, in partnership with the Forestry and Hunting Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture and the non-governmental organization Istok, implemented two projects costing about $0.8 million. The projects focused on the development of cost-effective and sustainable environmental rehabilitation and management of forest lands and the development of forestry regulations. Legal and regulatory frameworks have already been established to allow schoolchildren to contribute to efforts to preserve local forests.

27. From 2005 to 2008, the Global Environmental Facility/UNDP Small Grants Programme provided $91,600 in financing to local non-governmental organizations for various projects on environmental issues, including parallel improvements in the socio-economic conditions of local communities.

28. **Health**: from 2000 to June 2005, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) implemented various projects, at a total cost of $5.3 million, working with the East Kazakhstan Health Department and the Semey Consulting and Diagnostic

Centre, to improve screening systems and provide detailed health examinations and diagnoses to the public.

29. From 2003 to 2006, with funding from USAID, the American International Health Alliance implemented a project in partnership with the Ministry of Welfare and Social Protection and the East Kazakhstan Health Department. The project, which had a budget of $626,110, was aimed at integrating both social and health services within a primary health-care facility. As a result of the initiative, Semey city assigned a social worker to family group practices, organized training of volunteers in the use of social work assessment tools and other social work basics and provided free legal and social consultations on issues related to the effects of nuclear testing on the health of community members.

30. From 2005 to 2008, the German Embassy in Kazakhstan funded various micro-projects with local non-governmental organizations at a total cost of €126,000, mainly strengthening the health sector, but also supporting the educational system.

31. The Italian Embassy in Kazakhstan is funding two projects in 2008-2009, with a total budget of $70,000. The projects, which will be implemented by UNICEF, are to improve access of young children to good quality basic preventive and curative health and nutrition measures; promote early intervention practices; empower parents of children with special needs in caring for and educating their children; and improve day-care centres. As a result of the project, it is envisaged that local governments and non-governmental organizations will be able to improve planning of family-based and child-focused social policies at the local level; minimum standards of social counselling and family support services will be developed and introduced into the work of the social services system; free access to quality health-care services for children with special needs will be available; and day-care centres will be properly equipped.

32. From 2005 to 2007 UNICEF carried out an integrated social and medical services project with the total budget of $38,000, supporting the administration of Semey city and the Department of Health of East Kazakhstan to pilot youth-friendly services in Semey and to improve access of young people to health and psychosocial services. The results of the pilot are being used in the development of a national framework for youth-friendly services.

33. The Japanese Red Cross implemented four projects from 2005 to 2008, at a total cost of $157,000. The national partners were the National Tuberculosis Centre, the National AIDS Centre and the Semipalatinsk Health Department. The project contributed to an effective tuberculosis control programme through disease prevention, social and psychological support to targeted groups and health education. The project also aimed at improving the health of women and their children through safe motherhood; promoting safe behaviour in the light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and increasing public awareness and harm-reduction activities. As a result of the project, treatment was provided to a number of beneficiaries, including care, support and advice to pregnant women, and information and education about HIV/AIDS and disease-prevention issues was improved.

34. **Education**: from 2006 to 2008 UNICEF executed three projects, at a total cost of about $59,200, working with the Semipalatinsk State Pedagogical Institute and

the Semey branch of the national pre-school centre. The projects focused on the development of child-friendly school curricula; increasing the number of children receiving quality care as a result of early childhood development practices; and the establishment of community-based services for early childhood development. As a result of the projects, a curriculum on the application of child-friendly school methodologies was developed; educational workers obtained essential knowledge about child-friendly schools; an early childhood development framework, based on intersectoral approaches, was agreed upon; data on the situation of children with special needs in Semey city was made available; and recommendations on the inclusion of children with special needs in pre-schools were developed.

VI. Priorities for future action

Government programme 2009-2011

35. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of Kazakhstan developed a new programme for the Semipalatinsk region for 2009-2011. Its main objectives are to:

(a) Optimize State control over the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing area. It is proposed that a separate administrative unit for the former nuclear testing site be established;

(b) Create a more secure situation with regard to radiation and rehabilitate the environment in the region, including the transfer of some of the area under the national economy. Several research projects on nuclear safety have been proposed, including the sealing of affected areas and the use of uncontaminated lands;

(c) Safely secure objects using atomic energy located within the former nuclear testing site. It is also proposed to secure dangerous nuclear or radioactive objects;

(d) Rehabilitate the population and develop the social infrastructure. It is proposed to open new diagnostic centres in cooperation with the international community;

(e) Create a museum of the former test site.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

36. The year 2009 marks the tenth anniversary of the Tokyo conference. It is suggested that a conference be organized with the participation of international and national partners in order to review work that has been accomplished and to set future priorities. It is also suggested that the international community be called upon to reinforce donor interest and assistance to the Semipalatinsk region based on the findings of the review conference. The organization of the conference will require the assistance and cooperation of all United Nations and international organizations. In particular, UNDP, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and UNFPA should actively participate in efforts to take stock and define future directions.

37. The situation in the Semipalatinsk region remains critical, with more than 1.3 million people still suffering from the effects of almost 40 years of nuclear tests. The Semipalatinsk polygon has yet to be secured.

38. The Government of Kazakhstan implemented numerous projects and developed and implemented a programme to address the problems of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site during the period 2005-2007, providing assistance in the areas of medicine, radiology, science and social welfare. The donor community has also delivered a substantial amount of assistance since the Tokyo conference in 1999. However, low capacity in governance, limited participation of civil society in decision-making, lack of coordination among international donors, lack of coordination between the Government and the international community have hindered greater achievements.

39. The Government of Kazakhstan should focus on the improvement of administration, including the training of central authorities in the more effective use of resources. A multi-stakeholder mechanism, which would include the relevant Government ministries, donors, local government and civil society organizations, should be established. The Government may call on the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the UNDP office in Kazakhstan to assist in these efforts. The main priority areas are: radiation safety, socio-economic development, health, providing information and communicating risk to population and strengthening non-governmental organizations in their efforts to carry out socio-economic initiatives.